IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) Method for semi-endless or endless rolling by casting a metal strand, especially a steel strand (1a), which is cut to length as required after solidification, wherein the cut lengths (20) of cast strand are fed into a roller hearth furnace (2) for heating and homogenizing at rolling temperature and are then fed at rolling temperature into a rolling mill (3) to be rolled out, wherein the continuous casting is continued without interruption during the rolling operation, and wherein a sufficient buffer time for a roll change is maintained in the rolling mill, wherein, to carry out a roll change, the casting rate (Vc) is reduced as a function of the feed rate (Vw) of the rolling mill (3) and/or the roll-changing time, including the roll pass designing, and/or the buffer length of the roller hearth furnace (2) and/or the final rolled thickness after the strand has been cut to length, wherein the casting rate (Vc) is reduced by an amount greater than or equal to the amount given by the following formula:

$$\Delta V = V_w - \frac{1}{\Delta t / L + 1/V_w} (m/\min)$$

where

V = the reduction of the casting rate

Vw = the feed rate of the rolling mill

t = the roll-changing time

L = the length of the roller hearth furnace.

2. (Previously Presented) Method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein several coils (22) are produced from a multiple length (21).

3. (Previously Presented) Method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the buffer length (23) of the roller hearth furnace (2) is adjusted at least to one roller plane (24).

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Previously Presented) Method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the final rolled thickness and/or the feed rate (Vw) of the rolling mill is increased between rolling campaigns within a casting sequence after the strand has been cut to length.

6. (Currently Amended) ~~Method in accordance with Claim 5~~ Method for semi-endless or endless rolling by casting a metal strand, especially a steel strand (1a), which is cut to length as required after solidification, wherein the cut lengths (20) of

cast strand are fed into a roller hearth furnace (2) for heating and homogenizing at rolling temperature and are then fed at rolling temperature into a rolling mill (3) to be rolled out, wherein the continuous casting is continued without interruption during the rolling operation, and wherein a sufficient buffer time for a roll change is maintained in the rolling mill, wherein, to carry out a roll change, the casting rate (Vc) is reduced as a function of the feed rate (Vw) of the rolling mill (3) and/or the roll-changing time, including the roll pass designing, and/or the buffer length of the roller hearth furnace (2) and/or the final rolled thickness after the strand has been cut to length, wherein the final rolled thickness and/or the feed rate (Vw) of the rolling mill is increased between rolling campaigns within a casting sequence after the strand has been cut to length, and wherein a combination of adjustment of the casting rate (Vc) and adjustment of the final rolled thickness is used to optimize the production capacity.

7. (Currently Amended) ~~Method in accordance with Claim 5~~ Method for semi-endless or endless rolling by casting a metal strand, especially a steel strand (1a), which is cut to length as required after solidification, wherein the cut lengths (20) of cast strand are fed into a roller hearth furnace (2) for heating and homogenizing at rolling temperature and are then fed at

rolling temperature into a rolling mill (3) to be rolled out, wherein the continuous casting is continued without interruption during the rolling operation, and wherein a sufficient buffer time for a roll change is maintained in the rolling mill, wherein, to carry out a roll change, the casting rate (Vc) is reduced as a function of the feed rate (Vw) of the rolling mill (3) and/or the roll-changing time, including the roll pass designing, and/or the buffer length of the roller hearth furnace (2) and/or the final rolled thickness after the strand has been cut to length, wherein the final rolled thickness and/or the feed rate (Vw) of the rolling mill is increased between rolling campaigns within a casting sequence after the strand has been cut to length, and wherein the final rolled thickness is increased by a maximum factor of 2.5.

8. (Currently Amended) ~~Method in accordance with Claim 5~~ Method for semi-endless or endless rolling by casting a metal strand, especially a steel strand (1a), which is cut to length as required after solidification, wherein the cut lengths (20) of cast strand are fed into a roller hearth furnace (2) for heating and homogenizing at rolling temperature and are then fed at rolling temperature into a rolling mill (3) to be rolled out, wherein the continuous casting is continued without interruption during the rolling operation, and wherein a sufficient buffer

time for a roll change is maintained in the rolling mill, wherein, to carry out a roll change, the casting rate (Vc) is reduced as a function of the feed rate (Vw) of the rolling mill (3) and/or the roll-changing time, including the roll pass designing, and/or the buffer length of the roller hearth furnace (2) and/or the final rolled thickness after the strand has been cut to length, wherein the final rolled thickness and/or the feed rate (Vw) of the rolling mill is increased between rolling campaigns within a casting sequence after the strand has been cut to length, and wherein the final rolled thickness is increased by a maximum factor of 2, and the casting rate (Vc) is reduced to a minimum of 30%.

9. (Previously Presented) Method in accordance Claim 1, wherein after the strand has been cut to length, the casting rate (Vc) is reduced, and/or the feed rate (Vw) of the rolling mill (3) and/or the final rolled thickness is increased; upon completion of rolling, the worn rolls (3a) of the rolling mill (3) are changed; and after the roll change has been completed, the casting rate (Vc) is increased to the feed rate (Vw) of the rolling mill (3).

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Cancelled)